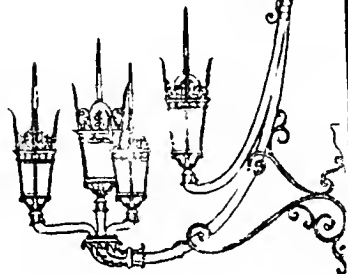


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COMMONWEALTH AVENUE URBAN DESIGN STUDY



PREPARED BY
KENNEY DEVELOPMENT Co., BOSTON
KOENEN ASSOCIATES, NEW YORK



B O S T O N U N I V E R S I T Y

CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE URBAN DESIGN STUDY

PREPARED BY

KENNEY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, BOSTON

KOENEN ASSOCIATES, NEW YORK

April, 1987

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1. EXISTING SITUATION

The academic center of the campus was originally located on the north side of Commonwealth Avenue, symbolized by the neo-Gothic buildings designed by the firm of Cram and Ferguson, which were constructed in the 1930s and 1940s. These buildings were based on master plan studies by Cram which located the new Charles River campus between the river on the north and Commonwealth Avenue on the south. Construction of Storrow Drive made Cram's plan, with its strong relationship to the river, impossible to complete. Consequently, the University has since acquired property along and south of Commonwealth Avenue to reuse existing buildings and construct new academic facilities. Thus, Commonwealth Avenue, originally to be the southern edge of the campus, has become the central space and focus of a campus which has developed along both sides of its street space. The visual character of this space at present lacks a consistent urban quality. The edges of the street are well defined at the center of the established campus but are poorly defined at other locations where parking lots abut the street. Furthermore, open spaces and sidewalks are not landscaped with a consistent or comprehensive design approach.

The distribution of academic space and the academic population is almost equally divided north and south of Commonwealth Avenue. At present there are 6,500 classroom seats north of Commonwealth Avenue and 5,700 classroom seats south. Future

construction will add even more facilities on the south side. However, useful open space, small as the amount is, is almost all on the north side. New University projects planned along Commonwealth Avenue provide the opportunity to develop a defined, attractive, urban street space and also to develop open spaces for the use of the academic population on Commonwealth Avenue.

The preparation of comprehensive Open Space Organization Plans and of Design Guidelines to co-ordinate those plans is based on an analysis of the existing conditions which underlie the present urban character of Commonwealth Avenue. These conditions include: land and building use, pedestrian and vehicular movement patterns, architectural character, landscape character, and the definition or lack of definition of street space and its visual character. Potential building sites are identified and their development is studied in context with the comprehensive Design Guidelines for the Avenue. A number of rights of way, setback areas, and landscape improvements are identified, in order that the visual character of the Avenue be improved and unified.

II. EXISTING CONDITONS

The boundaries of this analysis are Kenmore Square on the east and the Boston University Bridge on the West. See Location Plan, Figure 1.

Circulation

Commonwealth Avenue is the main pedestrian corridor linking the individual academic buildings located along its sidewalks. Student housing stands on the west, east, and south of the academic core, so most students use the sidewalks of Commonwealth Avenue. Movement across the Avenue is increasing as more facilities are developed south of Commonwealth Avenue.

Commonwealth Avenue is also a major city thoroughfare carrying vehicular traffic between Downtown Boston and residential communities to the west. University-generated traffic also uses the Avenue. Any successful design of Commonwealth Avenue must respond to pedestrian and automobile needs. The transit stops located along the median of Commonwealth Avenue are another circulation-planning issue to be recognized.

Building and Land Use

Commercial uses are found at street level in the older buildings, 623-629 and 708-728 Commonwealth Avenue. These food-service and student-related retail stores are a valuable amenity to the vitality and functional quality of the Avenue. The Student Union and the retail activities in Warren Towers and elsewhere also contribute to the interest and diversity of the

Avenue. See Figure 2.

Quality of Open Space

The existing open spaces lack overall organization, and although there are some excellent forecourts and open areas, there are some cases where individual spaces are poorly defined. See Figure 3.

As an urban campus, the University does not have many open spaces, large or small. The major circulation spaces of the campus are the sidewalks and setback areas along Commonwealth Avenue. The visual quality of these corridor-like spaces varies. The walk along the north side from the Student Union east to Granby Street is well defined, with a continuous building wall on one side and rows of trees along the curb side. A canopy effect and a sense of separation from the automobile parking and traffic are created. Unfortunately, the other blocks of sidewalk lack this attractive and consistent streetscape character. The tree spacing is uneven, and in some areas no trees exist. Open lots along Commonwealth Avenue used for parking also diminish the definition of street space and visual quality. Commonwealth Avenue is defined and successful when buildings located along it are set back from the curb approximately 45 feet. These setback areas are landscaped, creating a pleasant pedestrian space. This positive design feature should be extended.

The campus has two excellent small open spaces located on Commonwealth Avenue at the Student Union and Marsh Chapel. These are essentially paved spaces designed for pedestrian movement and as forecourts to the prominent buildings. They are linked to other small defined open spaces around the Law School

and over to Storror Drive. Lawn areas for active and passive recreation are located along the drive.

On the south side of Commonwealth Avenue the campus has two outdoor spaces, the recently completed court in front of the Science Center and the green area in front of the College of Communication Building, 640 Commonwealth Avenue. The completed court has rows of trees along the Avenue similar to the good landscape design in front of the neo-Gothic buildings. Seating and shade trees fill the space, which should mature into a comfortable and useful exterior court. The second space, the green area in front of the Communication Building, lacks a consistent or organized landscape concept. This space does not have landscape elements which have enough scale to add enough visual definition or character to the Avenue. There are a number of relatively small groups of plantings; however, they are not well related to each other. This space and the building elevation will at some point need design study as part of the development plan to expand 640 Commonwealth Avenue.

Visual Character

The buildings on Commonwealth Avenue were done in a variety of architectural styles. The execution of these styles was not consistently successful, and seen together their overall appearance lacks harmony. The most interesting buildings - and those most conducive to a good urban image -- are the neo-Gothic buildings by Ralph Cram and the traditional brick townhouses and apartment buildings which remain in some blocks along the Avenue. Many of the architectural elements which make these buildings so attractive can be reinterpreted on future proposed buildings to establish a more co-ordinated street elevation. This does not imply that the street facades will become visually

monotonous. One of the attractive features of the Cram buildings is the variety within an orderly use of limited materials and a limited range of heights.

The architectural elements expressed in the massing and elevations which should be recognized in future buildings include materials, height, roof line variation, type of window openings, and composition of window openings into vertical as well as horizontal alignment. The Cram buildings are stone clad, and the older townhouses are brick and stone. Using these materials on new buildings will help to provide a sense of visual continuity. These buildings vary in height from four-and-a-half stories to eight-story towers. This variety of height presents an interesting skyline. The new buildings should include massing elements which are taller than the basic four-to-seven-story bulk. Related to the varied skyline, the composition of the elevation elements should incorporate the feeling of verticality as expressed on the neo-Gothic buildings. This can be done in many ways, including window organization, use of tower elements, and use of stone detailing. The expressed horizontality and solidity of the base of the buildings can be recalled through the use of stone, or stone coping detailing, or by using a composition of individual windows rather than strips of windows.

III. URBAN DESIGN PROPOSAL

The Urban Design for the section of Commonwealth Avenue being studied proposes initial and potential Open Space Organization Plans. The implementation of these plans is further described by Design Guidelines. The preparation of Design Guidelines is based in part on aspects of the existing environment which have positive visual features and which help define or enhance the successful urban spaces on campus. The guidelines also provide for phased development, efficient pedestrian circulation, and pedestrian amenities. Design elements from the existing environment include:

1. Building height, the building setback, and the landscape of the setback and sidewalk space along the north side of Commonwealth Avenue in front of the neo-Gothic buildings.
2. The placement, size, and proportions of the open spaces along the north side of Commonwealth Avenue which accent the wall of the street created by the Student Union and neo-Gothic buildings.
3. The variety of open space uses: movement paths, forecourts, and lawn areas.
4. The linkage of the variety of spaces listed above.

The Urban Design proposals include the following:

1. Locate and define building sites and open landscape areas which should receive design and physical improvements.
2. Suggest for each building site a height range, a building front alignment related to the Commonwealth Avenue right of way, the building bulk, and a range of exterior building materials.
3. Locate and define size and configuration of a sequence of linked open spaces. Establish a criterion for landscape design and pedestrian path organization in these spaces.
4. Identify different sidewalk and street space conditions along Commonwealth Avenue, using plan and section diagrams. For each condition, prepare design guidelines that define pavement and lawn areas, tree profiles and location, screening elements, seating arrangements, and methods of coordinating building entrances with paths in the open spaces.

Proposed Open Space Organization

Two plans have been prepared. One plan (Figure 4) indicates the initial phases of development of the new buildings along the north side of Commonwealth Avenue and the Sargent/Physics Building in conjunction with landscape development of urban space along Commonwealth Avenue. The other plan (Figure 5) is based on the development of all potential building sites along this sector of Commonwealth Avenue.

The concept of the proposed open space incorporates a number of

design features. New buildings on open lots have their front elevation located on a setback line. Drawings showing all street facades have been prepared to explain the proposed improvement to the street "wall." (See Figure 13.) Open spaces similar in scale to the forecourt spaces at Marsh Chapel are located on Commonwealth Avenue on either side of Morse Auditorium to provide usable outdoor space on the south side. A landscape design structure along the sidewalk is created for the development of an ordered and attractive image along Commonwealth Avenue through the academic campus area. Double rows of trees on either side of the sidewalk, planted 30 feet apart to reinforce the existing trees, are described. Pedestrian crossings across the Avenue are articulated by extending the curb line into the parking zone at the crosswalk.

Potential Building Development Parcels

Five sites for future development are potentially available within the academic area along this section of Commonwealth Avenue. (See Figure 6.) Two of the sites, 4 and 5, were not considered as part of the University's Master Plan, since they are recently completed open spaces. At the suggestion of the BRA, they have been included to enhance the design of Commonwealth Avenue and to allow study of potential longer-range development projects. The design and construction of buildings based on the Design Guidelines will organize the potential buildable floor area on the sites so the building facades add definition and visual character to the space of Commonwealth Avenue.

Site 1. This site, which is Site N in the Master Plan, presently accommodates a parking lot with a one-story restaurant. A five-to seven-story building with accent towers

would be compatible in height and rhythm with the neo-Gothic academic buildings immediately to the west. The building should be built to a setback line similar to the neo-Gothic alignment extending the street "wall." A total floor area of 120,000 to 160,000 sq. ft. is possible within the massing envelope described by the Design Guidelines.

Site 2. These parcels are the same as Site Q in the Master Plan. Parking could be constructed on the first few levels below grade. Five-to seven-story heights are compatible with the existing hotel and campus buildings. A taller building mass near Kenmore Square would be an appropriate design feature. Accent towers of eight or nine floors on the site west of the hotel would relate to the campus skyline. (See Figure 13.) These buildings should be built to the property line to define the street space and provide an accent to the pedestrian landscaped space further west. To accent the wall effect, the site should have punctuated open spaces or forecourts at entrances and pedestrian ways. The residential character and scale of the Bay State Road Historic District will be included in the design criteria for the development of the parcel which abuts this road.

Site 3. This parcel, which is Site I in the Master Plan, is located at the west end of the academic core. It is used at present for parking and has a building which houses the existing Sargent College. The size and configuration of the existing buildings underutilize the development potential of the parcel. A massing envelope of three to five stories built to the setback line along Commonwealth Avenue and University Road is compatible with the bulk of the Student Union on the east and extends the street "wall" from the Union. The large building footprint provides the opportunity for development of large academic areas

within the mass. This site is also an excellent location for a tall building, such as a tower, located to maximize its view from the Turnpike or Storow Drive. This building would be no taller than the nearby Law School tower. It would be located within the part of the parcel between the bridge and University Road, set back from Commonwealth Avenue.

Because of its topography, which slopes down from Commonwealth Avenue, this site can accommodate two or three levels of parking below grade. Approximately 240 cars per level can be planned for.

Site 4. This land area could be used as part of a project to enlarge the existing building which presently houses the College of Communication, 640 Commonwealth Avenue. A four-or five-story height would blend with the existing structure, which itself can accommodate an additional floor. Each floor would have approximately 24,000 sq. ft. The building would be placed on the proposed setback line. The east wall will define an open space in front of the new Sargent/Physics Building. Until this site is developed, the buildable area will be retained, as it is an open lawn area with scattered trees and walks.

Site 5. If the Science Center requires expansion space, the east part of the new court could be developed. A land area of 14,000 sq. ft. could be used, providing a useful and well proportioned forecourt for the Science Center. A four-or five-story building would create a good massing composition with the existing building. The new addition could contain 56,000 to 70,000 square feet of floor area.

Street Landscape Design Guidelines

To guide the implementation of the Commonwealth Avenue Urban Design Proposals, four different street section conditions are identified, and each has a set of proposed Design Guidelines. The conditions occur at different locations along the Avenue. Condition A (see Figure 7) occurs on the north side between Granby and Sherborn Streets. The existing building setback line is extended over to these blocks. The sidewalk and lawn area dimensions are retained. Street tree alignments are also extended. These guidelines, used at potential building Site 1 will reinforce and continue the positive urban design character.

Condition B (see Figure 8) occurs at potential building Sites 2a and 2b between Sherborn Street and Deerfield Street. In this situation, buildings would be constructed to the lot line. Trees are located in the right of way, as in the other blocks. Because of the proximity to Kenmore Square, where buildings are built to line, these sites would be designed to link two different types of pedestrian space.

Condition C (see Figure 9) occurs on the south side of Commonwealth Avenue between Morse Auditorium and Warren Towers. Design Guidelines are established for the sidewalk and setback area along the existing open lawn area, which is also a potential building site in the future. The Design Guidelines outline the development of an ordered and defined street edge with or without the added benefit of a building wall.

Condition D (see Figure 10) occurs at the crosswalks along Commonwealth Avenue. The improvements include extension of concrete paved sidewalks into the parking zones to provide pedestrians with a large safety zone. The walkways across Commonwealth Avenue are defined by masonry pavement patterns set within a concrete or masonry border. This border distinguishes the walk zone from the bituminous surface of the Avenue.

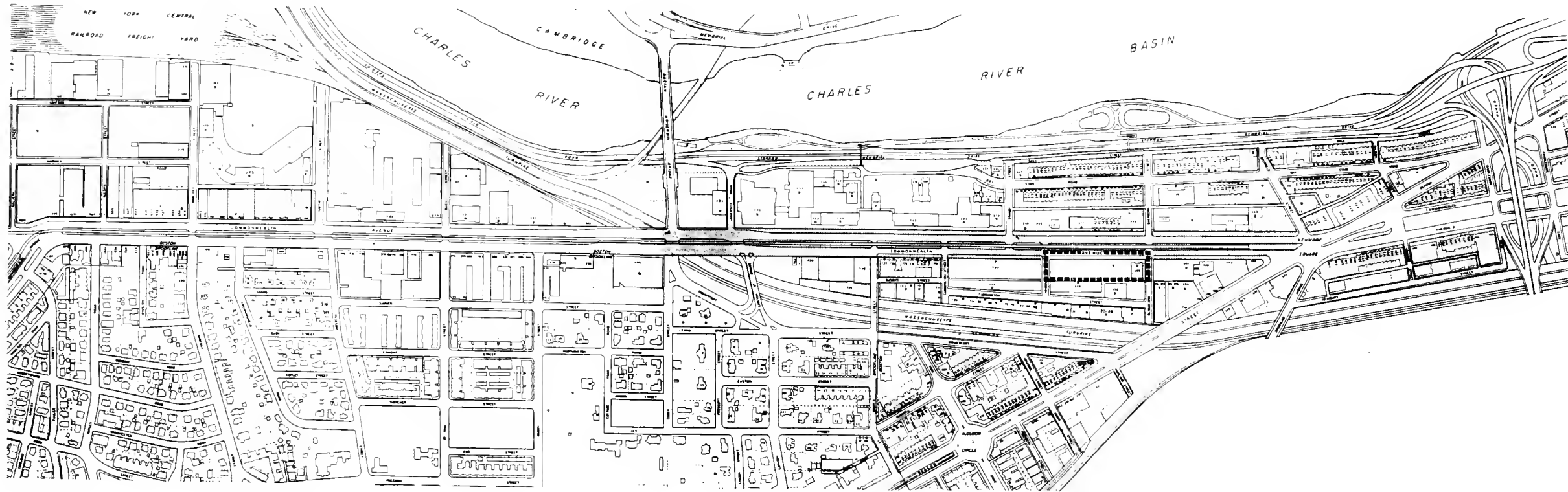
IV. SUGGESTED CONCEPTUAL DESIGN PLAN AT 620 AND 640 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE

The construction of the new Sargent/Physics Building at 620 Commonwealth Avenue includes development of the open space out to Commonwealth Avenue. This space is, of course, part of the larger space which extends west to Warren Towers. This open space also has direct impact on the definition and visual character of a long section of Commonwealth Avenue. The Potential Open Space Organization Plan (Figure 5) locates a future building in this space in front of the College of Communication building. Even though development is not likely to occur on this site in the near future, a Suggested Conceptual Plan was prepared which coordinates landscape development of the entire open space. At a future date, when the redevelopment and possible expansion of the College of Communication building is studied, the next phase of this related landscape development will be studied. The Design Guideline Condition C for the street space and the setback from Commonwealth Avenue on the south side was followed.

The plan (Figure 11) indicates an initial phase which integrates the open space design in front of 620 with the sidewalk and setback landscape design along the south side of Commonwealth Avenue. The conceptual plan drawing also indicates the sidewalk and setback Design Guidelines for Conditions A and B along the north side of Commonwealth Avenue.

The open space in front of 620 will be paved with masonry materials to accommodate pedestrian circulation, which can enter this space from many points. A bosque of trees planted 30 feet on center, set in grates, will create the "cover" over this space and provide an extension of the green foliage from the street trees along the Avenue. Benches will be placed on the paved areas, coordinated with the tree alignment.

If and when a building is constructed in the space in front of 640, the new structure would be built up to the setback line. The street landscape in the right of way and setback area would remain and would be already maturing. The placement of benches along the edge of the sidewalk reinforces the definition of the street space. Trees and shrubs will be planted behind the benches in the setback area. The landscape setting for a future building is therefore already in place and will have been defining the south side of Commonwealth Avenue for many years.



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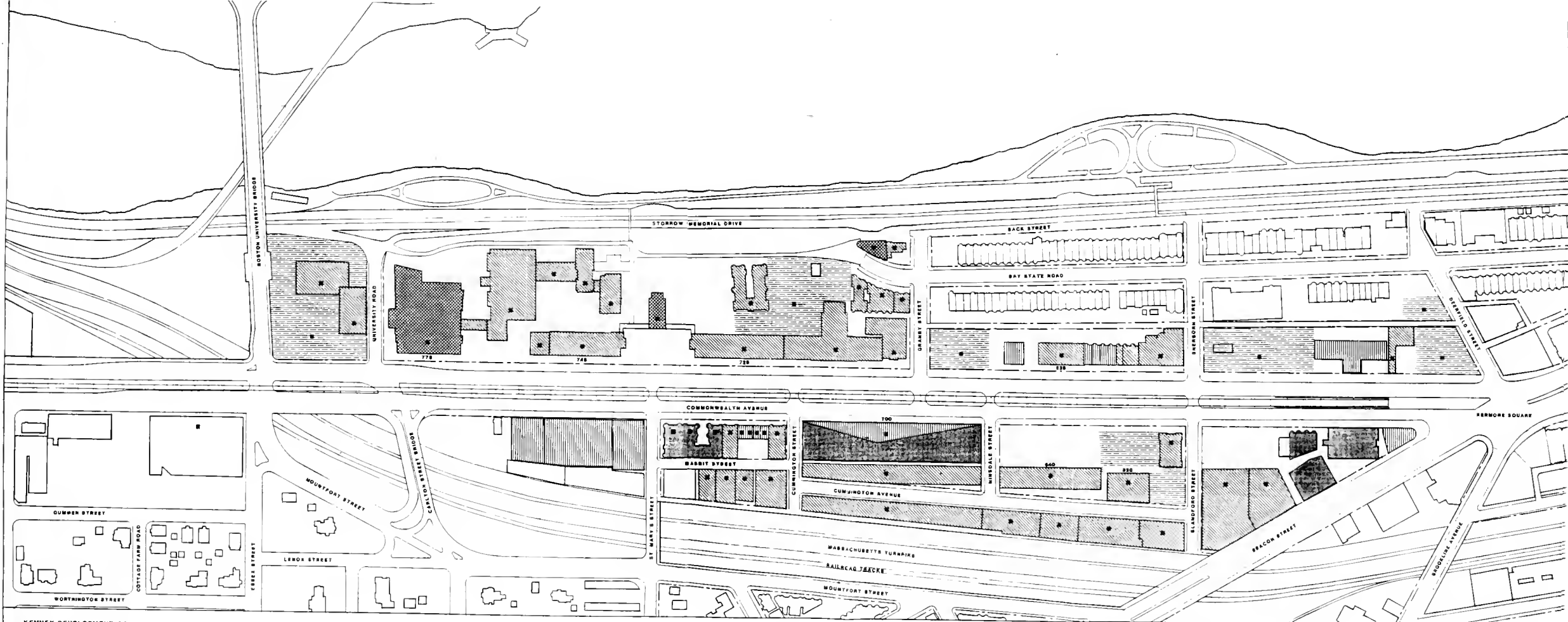
BOSTON UNIVERSITY CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS MASTERPLAN

□ URBAN DESIGN AREA
■ CONCEPTUAL DESIGN AREA

LOCATION PLAN:
COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
URBAN DESIGN STUDY

FIGURE 1





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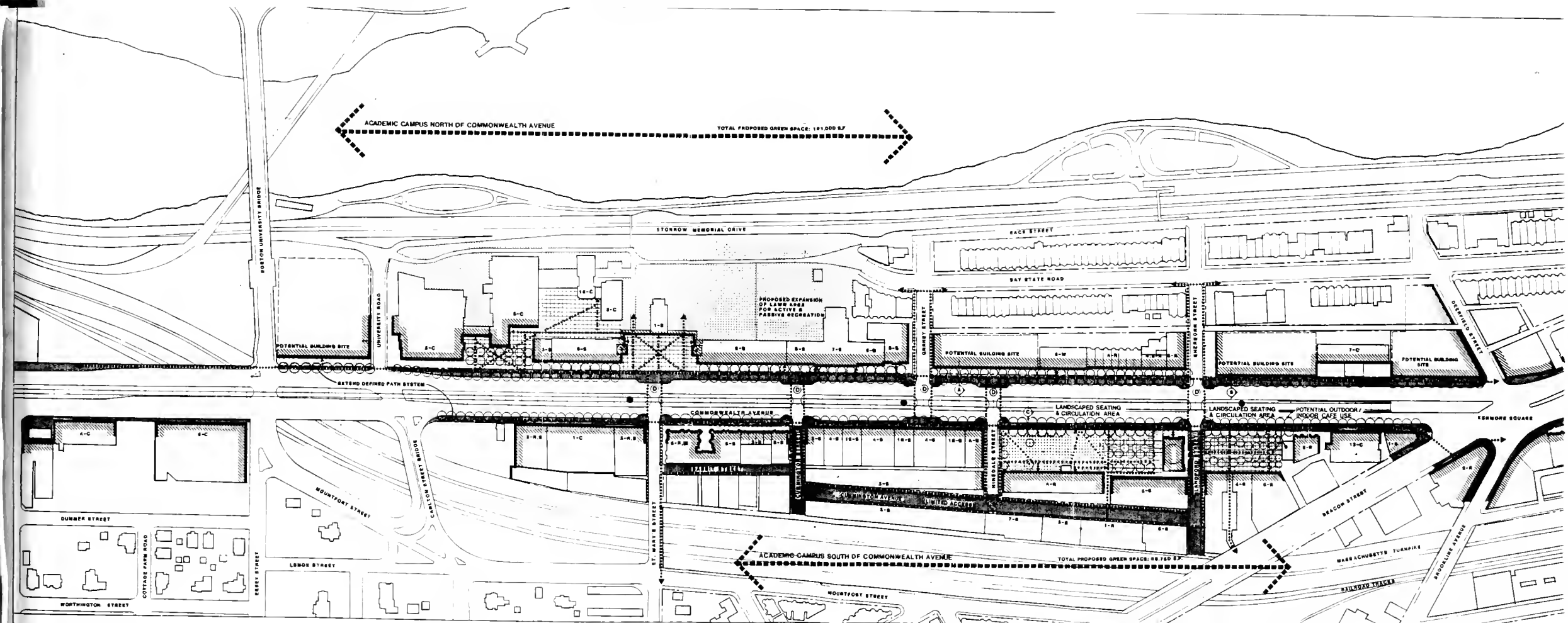
ACADEMIC
STUDENT ACTIVITIES
COMMERCIAL
RESIDENTIAL
PARKING

UNIVERSITY PROPERTY
STREET ADDRESS

EXISTING STREET LEVEL USES

FIGURE 2





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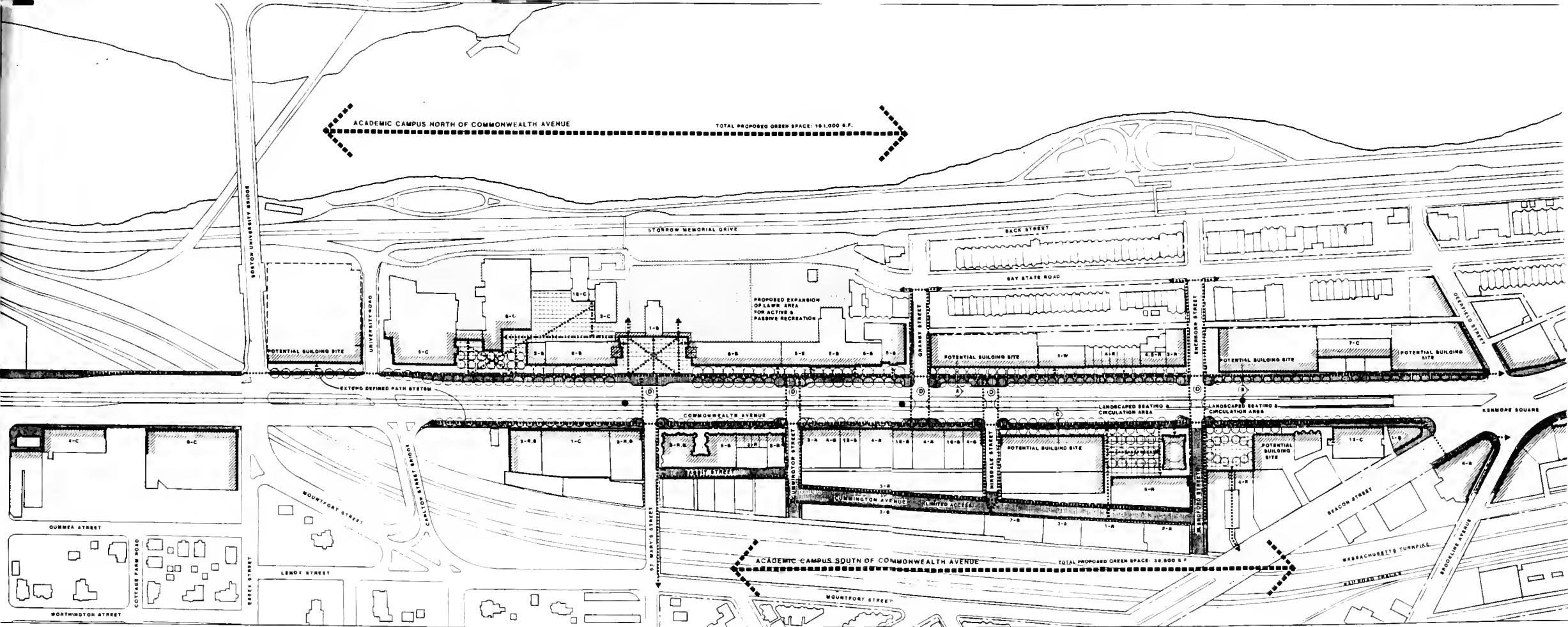
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BOSTON UNIVERSITY CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS MASTERPLAN

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 7 - S STONE | BUILDING EDGE | PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION |
| - C CONCRETE | PAVED OPEN SPACE | ▲ PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT |
| - R RED BRICK | GREEN OPEN SPACE | ▲ BUILDING ENTRANCE |
| - B BUFF BRICK | LANDSCAPED SETBACK | ● PUBLIC TRANSIT STOP |
| - W CURTAIN WALL | DEFINED PEDESTRIAN PATH | ○ STREET TREE |

PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
ORGANIZATION
INITIAL DEVELOPMENT
FIGURE 4





BOSTON UNIVERSITY
CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS
MASTERPLAN

- 7-B STONE
 -C CONCRETE
 -R RED BRICK
 -B BUFF BRICK
 -W CURTAIN WALL

- BUILDING EDGE
 PAVED OPEN SPACE
 GREEN OPEN SPACE
 LANDSCAPED SETBACK
 DEFINED PEDESTRIAN PATH

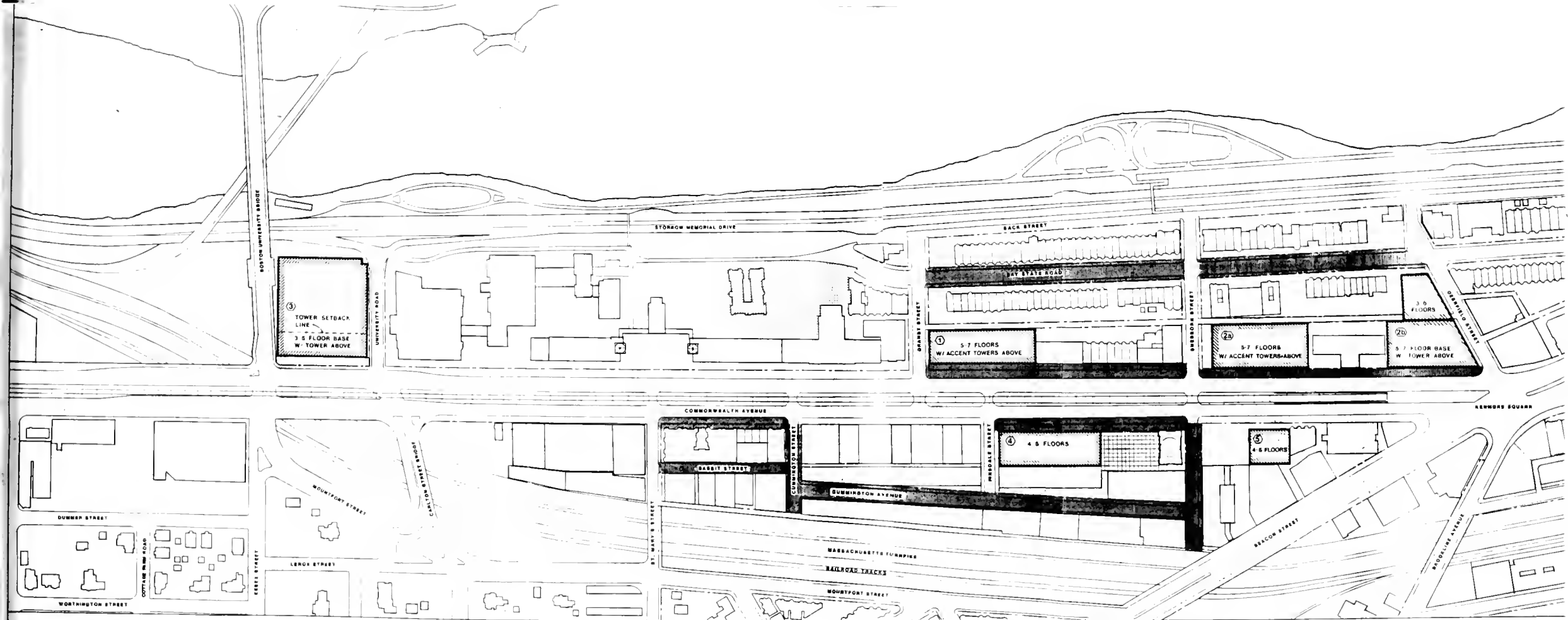
- PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION
 ▲ PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT
 ▲ BUILDING ENTRANCE
 ● PUBLIC TRANSIT STOP
 ○ STREET TREES

**PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
 ORGANIZATION
 POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

FIGURE 5
 0 100 200 300 400 500 600
 FEET

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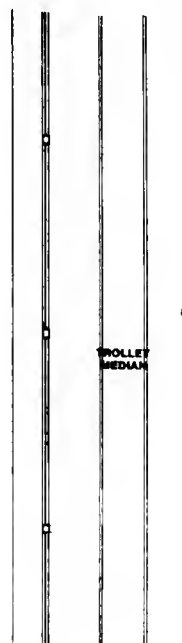
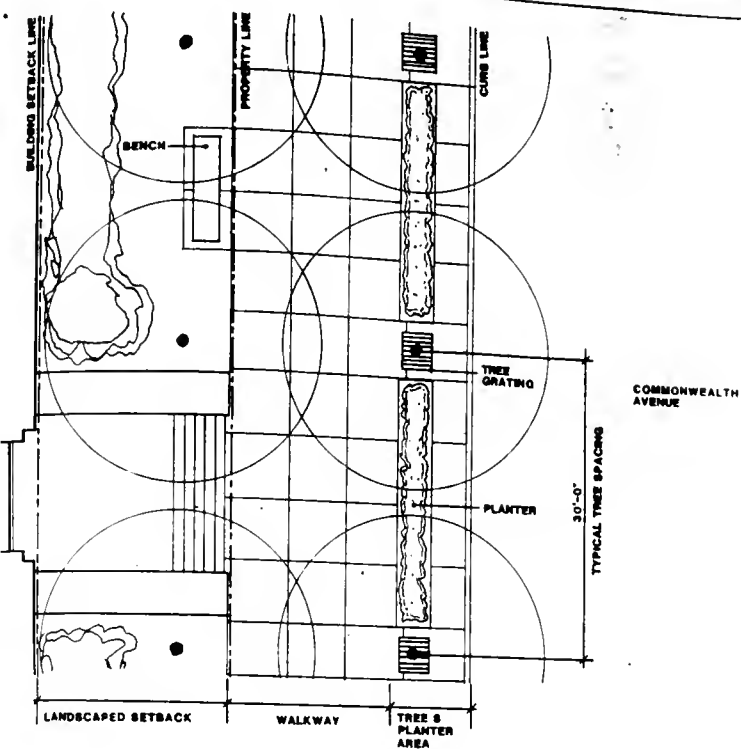
BOSTON UNIVERSITY CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS MASTERPLAN

- POTENTIAL BUILDING SITE
- POTENTIAL STREETScape DEVELOPMENT
- POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

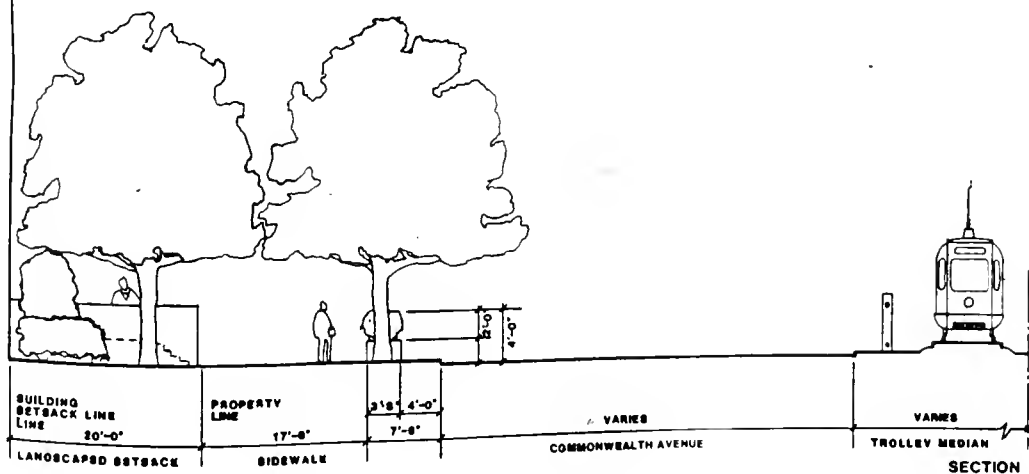
POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
PARCELS

FIGURE 6





PLAN



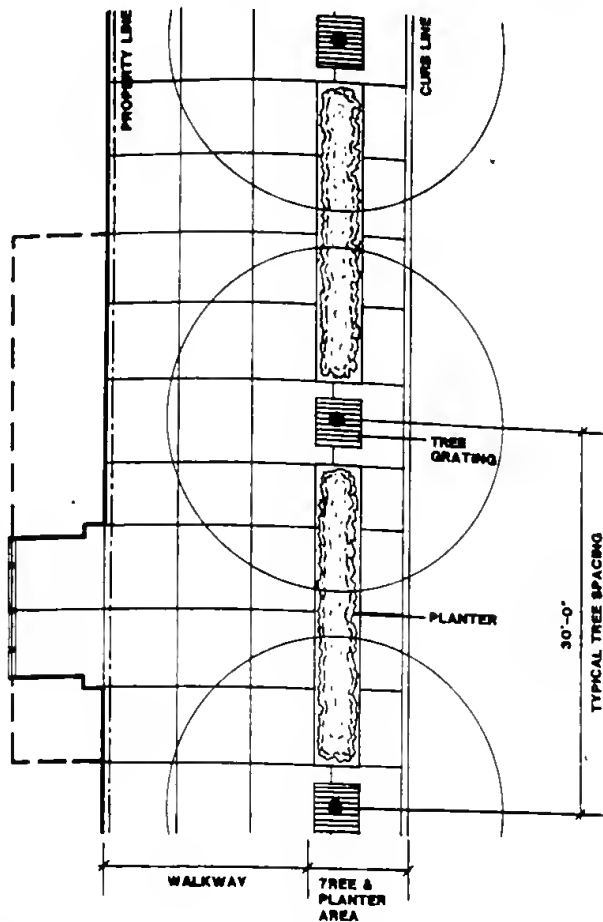
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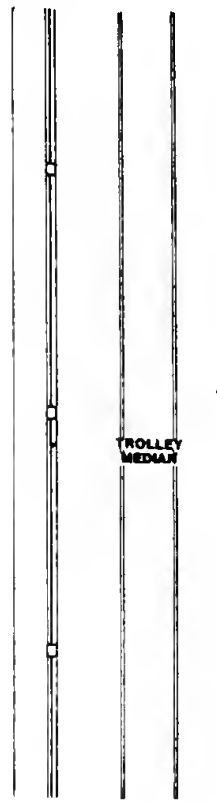
BOSTON UNIVERSITY **CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS** **MASTERPLAN**

PROPOSED STREET LANDSCAPE
DESIGN GUIDELINES
CONDITION A
FIGURE 7





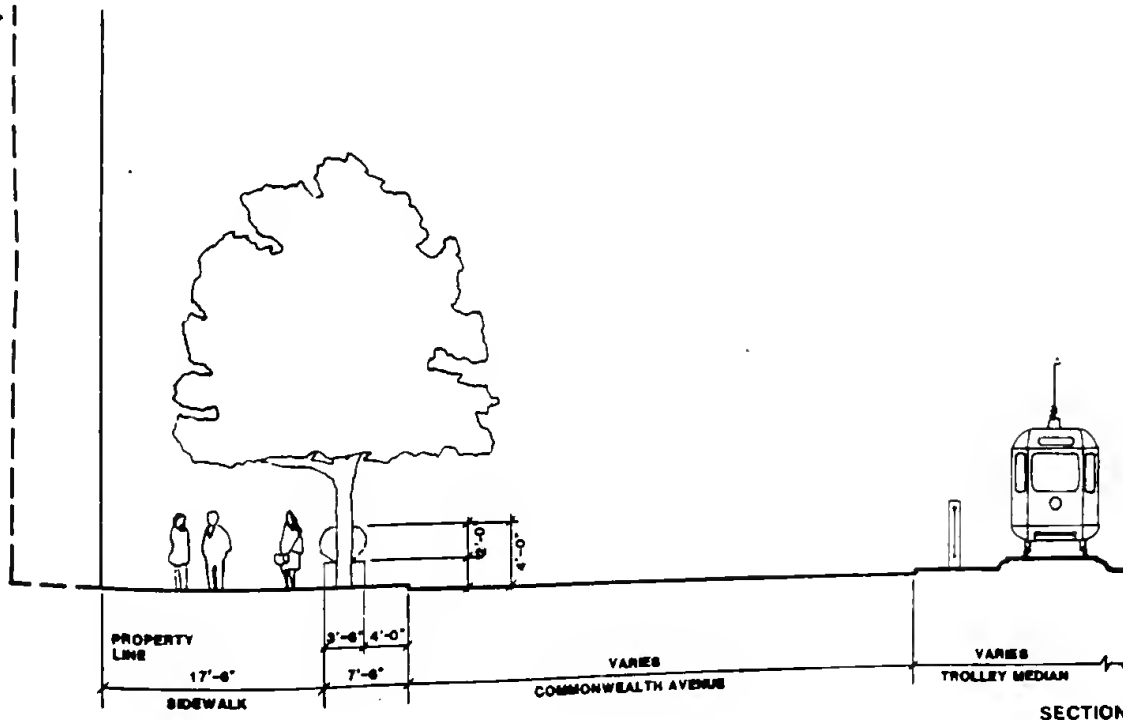
COMMONWEALTH AVENUE



TROLLEY MEDIAN

PLAN

TBACK AT:
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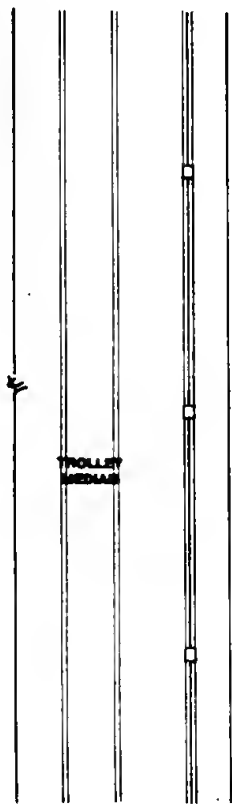
BOSTON UNIVERSITY **CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS** **MASTERPLAN**

PROPOSED STREET LANDSCAPE
DESIGN GUIDELINES

CONDITION 8

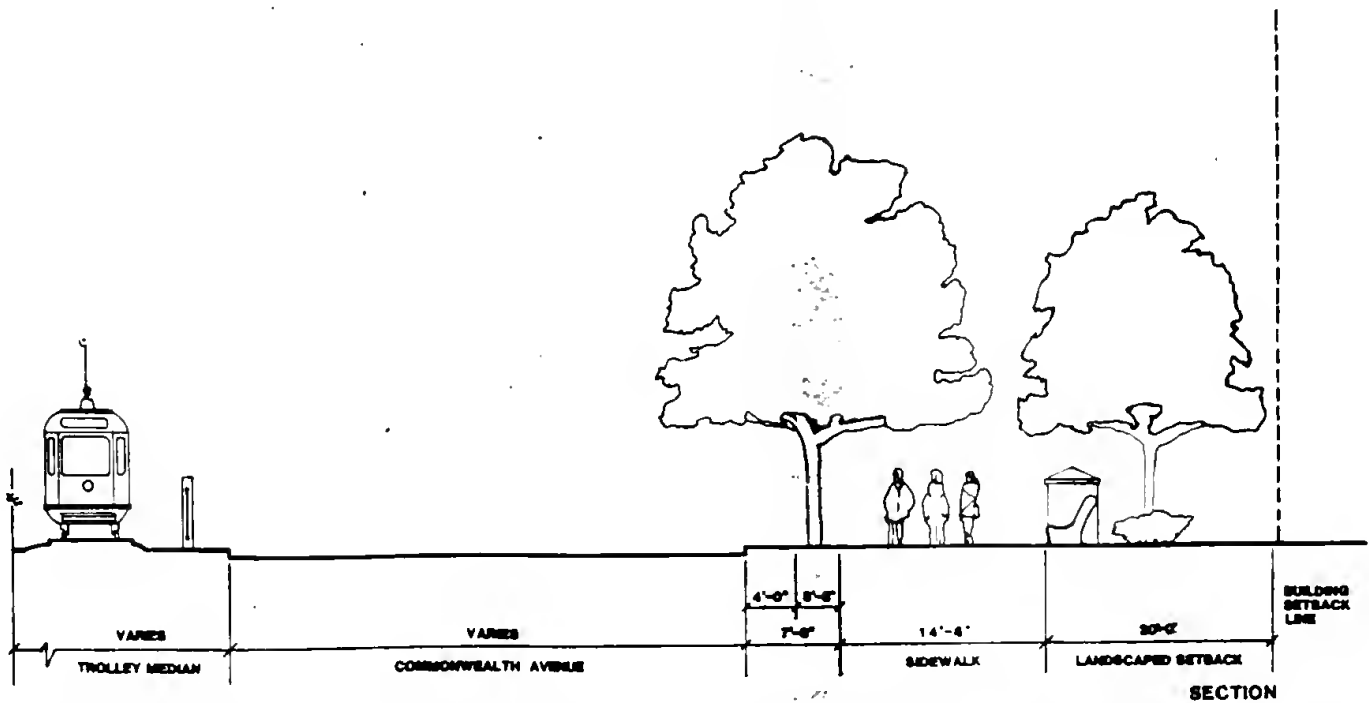
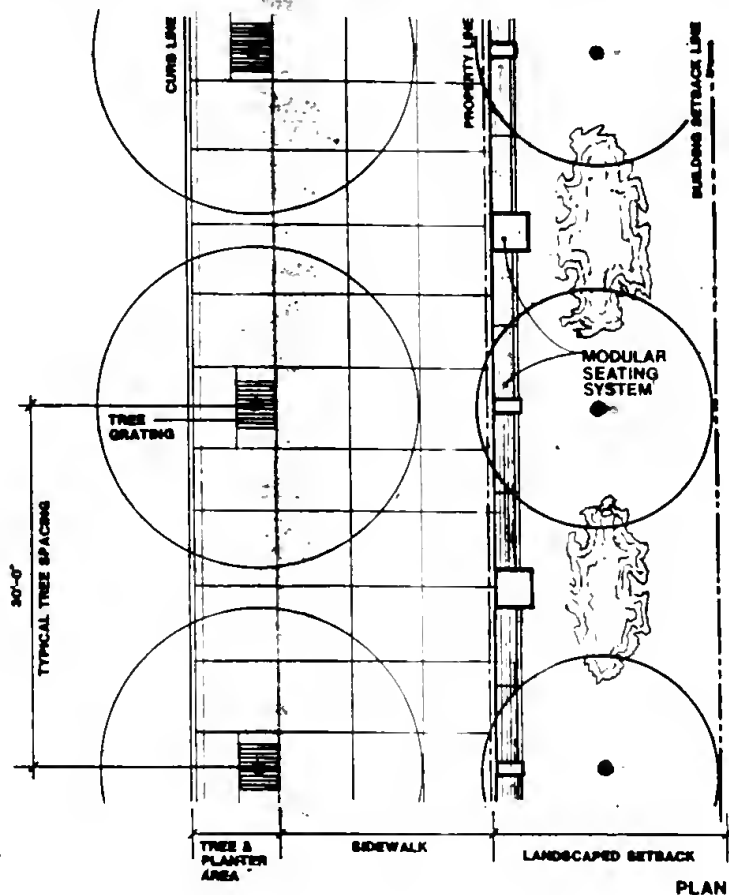
FIGURE 8





TROLLEY
MEDIAN

COMMONWEALTH
AVENUE



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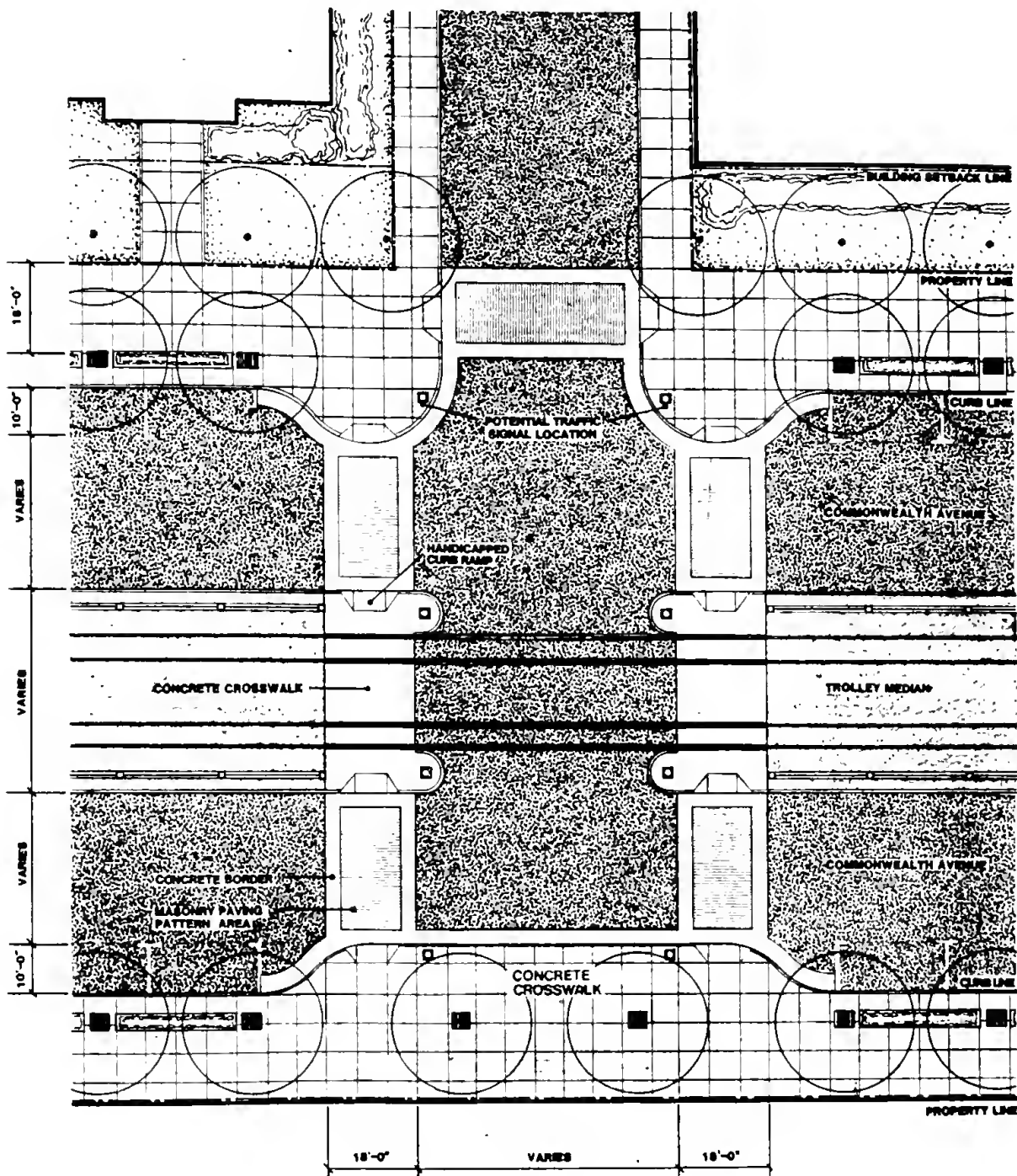
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PROPOSED STREET LANDSCAPE
DESIGN GUIDELINES

CONDITION C

FIGURE 9





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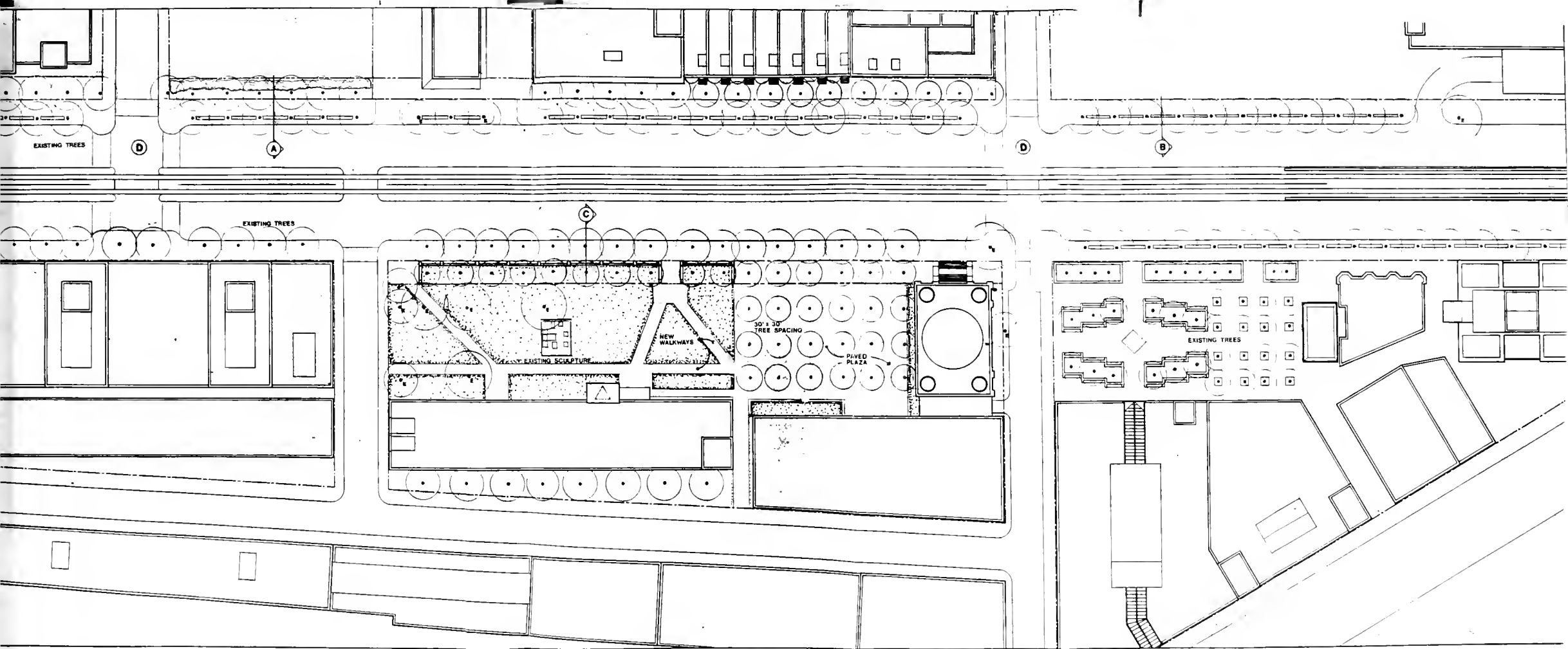
BOSTON UNIVERSITY **CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS** **MASTERPLAN**

PROPOSED STREET LANDSCAPE
DESIGN GUIDELINES

CONDITION D

FIGURE 10





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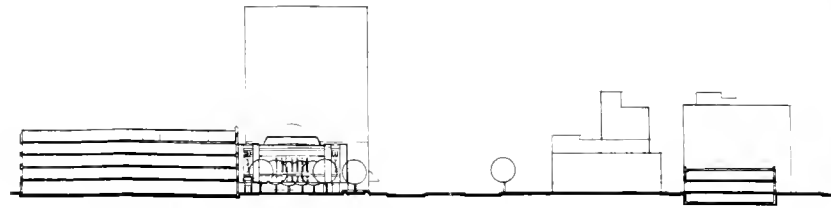
BOSTON UNIVERSITY CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS MASTERPLAN

- PROPERTY LINE
- BUILDING SETBACK LINE
- ⊙ DESIGN GUIDELINES
- EXISTING TREE
- NEW TREE

SUGGESTED CONCEPTUAL DESIGN
INITIAL PHASE

FIGURE 11

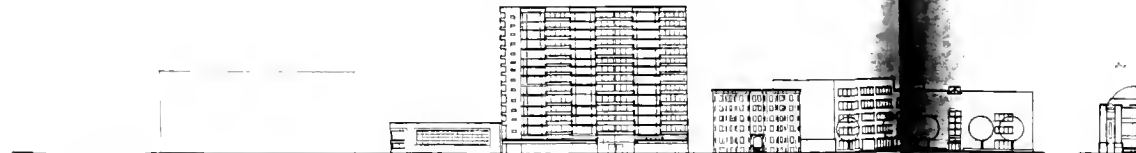




SCIENCE CENTER

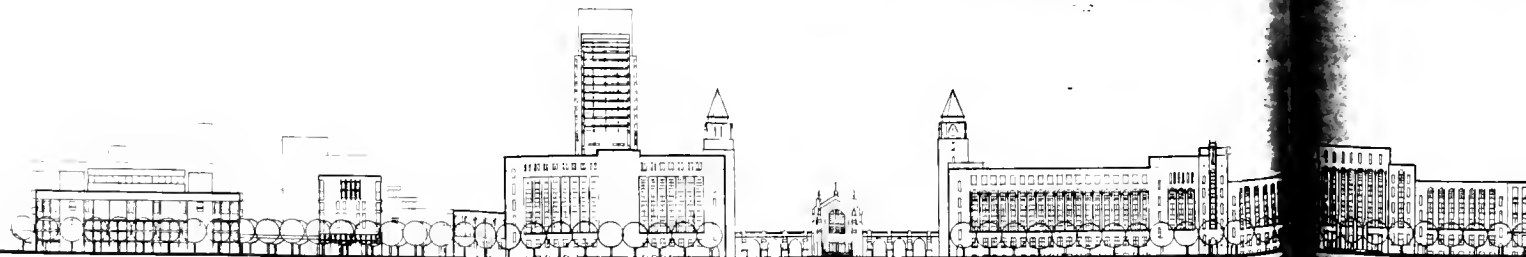
MORSE AUDITORIUM

NORTH - SOUTH SECTION AT SCIENCE CENTER



KENMORE SQUARE

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
BRIDGE

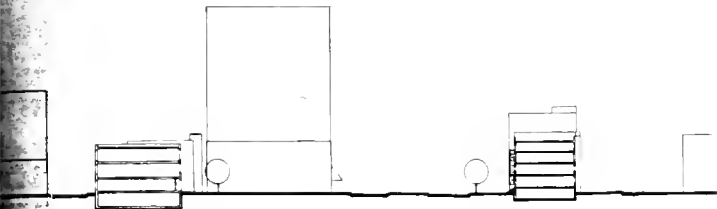


GEORGE SHERMAN UNION

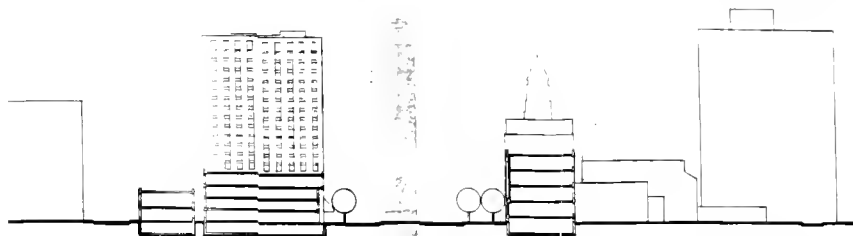
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SCHOOL OF LAW

MARSH CHAPEL

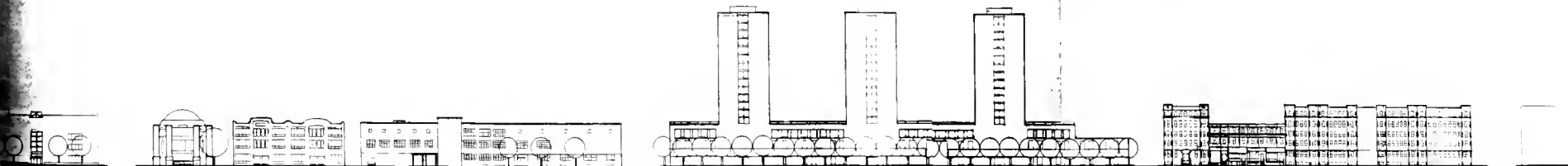


NORTH - SOUTH SECTION AT SCHOOL OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION



NORTH - SOUTH SECTION AT WARREN TOWERS

SCHOOL OF LAW



PROPOSED SARGENT / PHYSICS
BUILDING

WARREN TOWERS

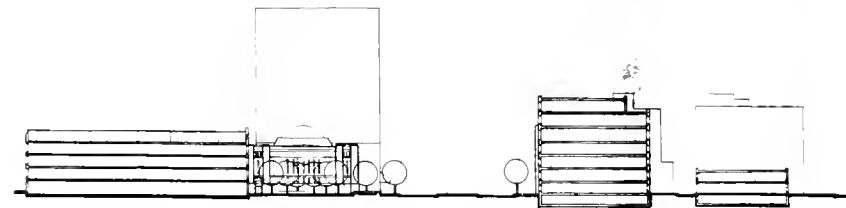
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SCHOOL OF NURSING

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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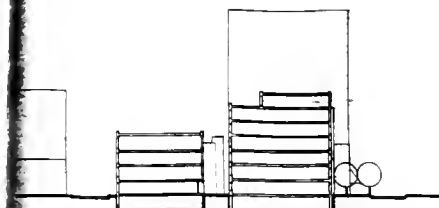


SCIENCE CENTER

MORSE AUDITORIUM

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE 2a

NORTH - SOUTH SECTION AT SCIENCE CENTER



POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE 4

NORTH - SOUTH SECTION AT SCH



KENMORE SQUARE

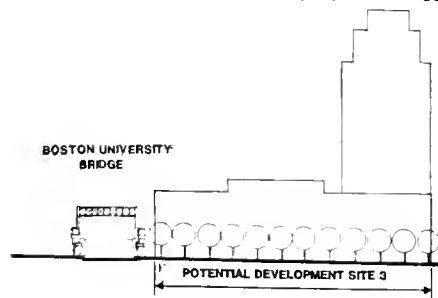
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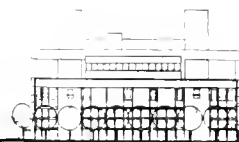
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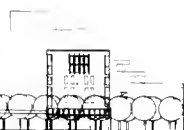


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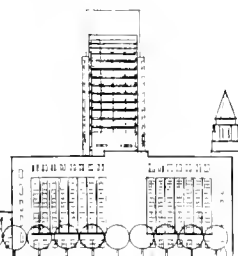
BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE



GEORGE SHERMAN UNION



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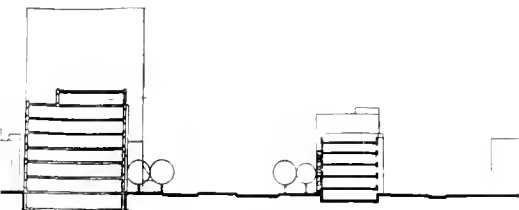
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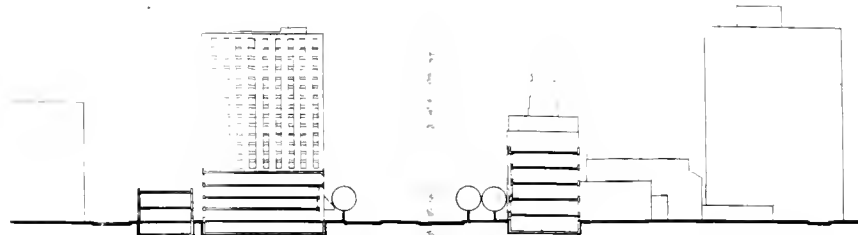
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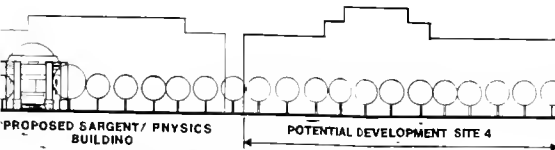
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NORTH - SOUTH SECTION AT WARREN TOWERS

SCHOOL OF LAW

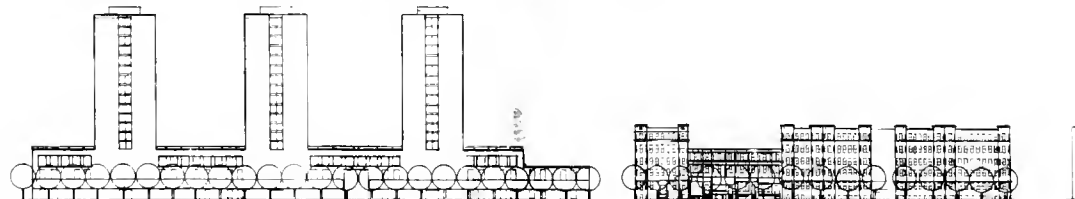
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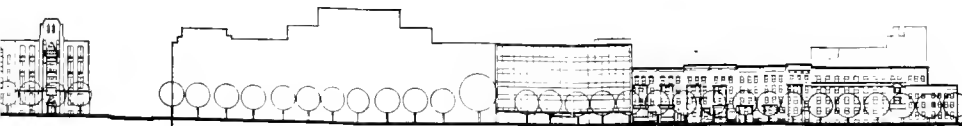
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COMMONWEALTH AVENUE ELEVATION LOOKING SOUTH



WARREN TOWERS

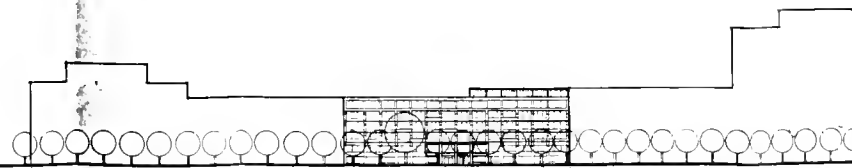


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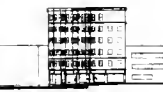
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE ELEVATION LOOKING NORTH



POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE 2a

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE 2b



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